

## **Economic Development Advisory Council**

### **12.02.09 Meeting minutes**

#### **Americana Room – Hampshire Hills**

#### **Present:**

Tracy Bardsley, Do-it  
Brad Chappell, Chappell Tractor  
Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co  
George Infanti, Milford Paint  
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank  
Tim O'Connell, Butternut Farms (invited guest)  
Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club  
Penny Seaver, Bean, Seaver & Smith  
Sean Trombly, Trombly Farms  
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission  
John McCormack, TIFD representative  
Bill Parker, Director Community Development  
Nate Carmen, BOS representative  
Janet Langdell, Planning Board representative

Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

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T. Sapienza called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

#### **Minutes:**

G. Infanti made a motion to accept the 9/8/09 minutes as written. S. Trombly seconded and all in favor. G. Infanti made a motion to table the 10/14/09 minutes to the next meeting.

#### **Subcommittee reports:**

Tom Sapienza noted that all three groups have been meeting and making progress.

#### **Policies and procedures:**

J. McCormack said that they have had meetings with the Community Development staff, the Building Inspectors and the Fire Department. We've found that the groups and departments are tied in to a software system called Munis that is quite effective with the permitting process computerized and readily accessible. There is a good interrelationship particularly between the Building and Fire Departments and, in fact there, is regularly scheduled communication and some ongoing initiatives to further improve responsiveness. Everyone seems to be very aware that "time is money" and have gotten the message that "this is a tough business climate." Some of the upcoming initiatives are: refurbishments to the computer system, increasing mobility in the field for the inspectors, integrating Munis permits with the Fire Department's Firehouse software, and possibly putting the whole permitting process online. We also learned that the cost of our permits, in comparison to our neighbors, is very reasonable. The next session will be with Public Works and although they are not on Munis yet, Guy has already taken initiatives and they are moving forward with these changes. T. Sapienza said this is the most politically sensitive sub-committee and it sounds like we are off to a great start.

#### **Website:**

T. Bardsley said they are also moving forward with two public input sessions scheduled for Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> here at Hampshire Hills; one at 7:30AM and one at 7:00PM. We're looking for people to provide some input on what they'd like to see and what would make the website easier to use. Notices have been published and an e-mail has already gone out to the Chamber of Commerce using their marketing and media list. A notice is running on Peg Access and it is on Do-it's Facebook page. A general e-mail will be sent out with the basic information and directing responses to go to Do-it. M. Ciardelli asked if this information was on this our web site; a brief discussion followed. T. Sapienza said the focus groups will be valuable in that they will be confined to Milford's needs and get people to buy into what we are doing. B. Parker agreed that the focus groups are a good idea. T.

Sapienza then thanked Bill Parker for his excellent conference report notes along with the wealth of information for references and information for good municipal web sites.

### Land use:

H. Leach said the sub-committee has been gearing up and meeting every week. We have been looking at developing a new zoning area between Route 13 North and North River Rd and then described the area. Although this is zoned residential, it really is a mixed use area; those current uses were shown on a comparison map. There have been controversial applications before the Planning Board and we don't feel this area is zoned appropriately to protect both the residences and the businesses in the area. The R-C or Residential-Commercial District would be balanced, fair and everyone would be protected; the gateway to Milford from the north, the character and rural look of the town, the agricultural areas and vistas of North River Rd, and the wellhead protection area for the town wells. It would allow current businesses to expand the size of their building and expand their use by Special Exception making their business more strong and viable. The 300ft setbacks and land use restrictions will protect the home owners. Agriculture in the area will be protected by controlling pollution and traffic and allowing some expansion of their businesses. This will also give new businesses a framework to work within so that people will have expectations of what is and is not allowed. The key piece here is the traffic; it can't handle the intensity of a Lowes or a Cineplex. The limited uses are very rural in nature and comparable to the ICI district. This special exceptions listed would be appropriate on some of the lots or on a part of some of these lots, but might not be appropriate right next to the road or somebody's back porch and there may be viable places more appropriate and geared more to a manufacturing use. Discussion on the contaminated property followed. B. Parker said there are studies going on right now on some of these lots and there is grant money available from NRPC for Brownfield sites, lots with re-development potential for economic development. H. Leach noted that the setback requirements will keep the rural character of the area; 50ft front setbacks and a 30ft side setback if the site is adjacent to a residence. The lot size minimum will be 60,000SF with 40% open space and there will be buffer zones with trees and shrubs. The size of a facility will be dependant on the lot size and the intensity of the use with traffic being considered. To put things in perspective, Walgreens has 30% open space. B. Parker added that the setbacks, open space, and parking regulations will determine the building size. H. Leach said the 40% vs. 30% open space was a compromised number & the signage regulations that will also tie in to this are still being developed. The proposed signs can be up to 4ft by 8ft, the size of a piece of plywood, which is consistent with the rest of town. There will be no internal illumination and no electronics in keeping with the character of the area. B. Parker said it would be bigger than what is allowed out there now, but this would be consistent with what is allowed in the L-C District along Nashua St.

M. Ciardelli asked what this change would do to the property values. H. Leach said commercial property is valued higher than residential property. J. Langdell said even if residential assessments go up because this would now be more of a commercial zone, the people who actually have residences can ask for an abatement to not increase their property taxes. B. Parker said he would verify that; it's an important piece of information for property owners. Property values would increase because the residence can be sold for commercial uses.

D. White asked why auto repair was not listed under Special Exceptions and referenced the existing repair shops. H. Leach said there was much discussion on this subject and the feel was that there are several areas in town that may be more appropriate where those types of businesses can go; we are trying to protect the scenic, rural view of this area. B. Parker said existing auto repair businesses can still go to the ZBA for an expansion of a nonconforming use to expand the building and expand the use; however, this zoning change would not allow future shops.

J. McCormack asked why maintain two acres. H. Leach replied that the lots would be consistent with the rest of the lots in the Residential R District. B. Chappell said he thought the two acre lot minimum was changed in town and discussion followed. J. Langdell said the context of lot sizes may be in regards to infill development and explained that was on the horizon for next year, but it is a huge picture. That may become a priority for this group to work on next year along with any priorities for the Brox property. B. Parker also noted that the Growth Management Ordinance may be expiring next year and that will take away the restriction on the number of permits issued per year, which we haven't even come close to.

T. Bardsley inquired about lighting restrictions. B. Parker said all lighting currently is to be downcast and the Boards will address the lighting.

J. McCormack inquired if there was any push back expected. J. Langdell said there would probably be some from the residents. B. Parker said this was originally proposed back in 1996 but never got to the level of the Planning Board, but the area has been under pressure to allow a greater degree of flexibility and to accommodate the mixed uses out there. J. Langdell said in reading the 1996 Planning Board minutes, the push back was that they wanted to look at Milford as an entirety not just one area.

G. Infanti said the sub-committee looked at all the uses that might work and they tried to be realistic. Any controversial uses and situations were put under Special Exceptions so that there would be double review by both the Planning Board and the Zoning Board. Cut and dry things that are already in the area such as farm stands, bed & breakfasts, churches and warehousing stayed as acceptable uses. Speaking for himself, and looking at what was done in the time we had, he would like to acknowledge the rest of the committee. This was a great group to work with and there was balance and mix on this committee.

J. McCormack asked why the focus on this area. G. Infanti said they met with Planning Board and went over all the areas in town. The sub-committee's first thought was Elm St but that is such a large area and is too big a project for this time frame. South St was looked at but everyone is waiting on the report from the Keene State students who are also studying the area. This area was chosen because we determined that it could be tackled within a short time frame. J. Langdell said the original request from the Planning Board was to look at all the zoning in town and this area particularly has had both interest and controversy. If we're going to look at it, we should and take it to the voters to get their take. M. Ciardelli asked if there were other areas like this in town. J. Langdell said the group started to think that way primarily for the Rte 13 South area, but again we are waiting for the Keene State students. The challenge in this area is to balance an established economic area with residential along Rte 13 North with a very unique area of North River Rd. J. McCormack said this is an excellent introduction to the community at large and could be used as a template for other areas.

P. Seaver said that although the residential folks may push back some, maybe there would be some relief as properties change hands with these restrictions. This is wonderful for both residential and commercial properties.

T. O'Connell asked if Sean wanted to sell a line of hay balers on his property, would he be able to. J. Langdell said he can sell grain and feed, but the hay balers would be a retail operation attached to the farm and he could go for a special exception from the ZBA. It should be approved if he met the criteria. H. Leach said the sub-committee really struggled with retail and recreational facilities because the definition can be very broad and there are always unintended consequences. Discussion followed.

C. Costantino said everybody's tried to do what is best for the area and to enable the landowners to be able to use their property reasonably. B. Parker added that the sub-committee also struggled with the intent of the district, to keep the rural and cultural character of the area. C. Costantino said there has been mixed use with a certain amount of controversy in that area which we are trying to address and make better for the landowners using it. All of us would like to keep North River Rd as it looks now, but the conservation commission would just like people to be thoughtful and reasonable of their abutters when they use their land.

M. Ciardelli asked why the district was not continued out to the hatchery on North River Rd to include the other farms. B. Parker said the Planning Board has spent a lot of time this year updating the agricultural definitions and he believes that farm stands and farmers markets are going to be allowed in the Residential R District. The sub-committee did not really want to extend commercial uses past where they currently exist. Discussion on the current uses then followed. J. Langdell said the effort to protect agriculture in Milford is not unique and there always has been a huge interest at the State level for the benefits it brings to the state. This one of our efforts to try to preserve that type of land use in our town

T. O'Connell noted that the president of the New Hampshire Farmer's Market Association, Kris McLeod, lives here in Milford and could be used as a resource for this committee. He then expressed some concern with wording for roadside stands and farmers markets. The proposed revisions by the Planning Board are basic statute

language and are OK; however, the reference in the last two lines of “farm stand kitchen” could be a snag. The Homestead license was established a few years ago for home residential kitchens and will impact Lull Farms greatly. He then read from the statute ... Homestead food license required... a residential, non-commercial kitchen where homemade foods are made, manufactured or processed or both, primarily for retail sales in farmers markets and farm stands... The Planning Board is knocking out farm stands selling items not made in a farm stand kitchen which almost implies on-site. J. Langdell said the definition was taken out of a section of the *Innovative Development Land Use* book which may have been written prior to the Homestead law. The language can certainly be re-crafted.

J. Langdell explained the process for this proposal saying that this concept will be presented to the Planning Board and in turn, the Planning Board will discuss the proposal and possibly move it forward to public hearing with the intent of putting it on as a warrant article in March for town vote. M. Ciardelli inquired how this committee could express support. J. Langdell replied by attendance at the televised public hearing, letters to the editor, or a guest commentary in the newspapers would be helpful. The presentation to the Planning Board will be on Tuesday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM.

T. Sapienza said he was thrilled with the job this sub-committee has done and it is a great example of what actually can be accomplished. Agriculture is such a business opportunity now and it will be very positive to develop that industry in a controlled way without negative impact to residents, existing businesses and the community. G. Infanti said that this was one of the areas that the Planning Board asked this group to look at and although a large part of this sub-committee has an interest in that area, we would like the support of the full council before we go any further so that it doesn't look like this was a special interest proposal.

M. Ciardelli made a motion to support this conceptual proposal with any potential revisions to the language. J. McCormack seconded and all in favor. This zoning change was unanimously endorsed by the Economic Development Advisory Council.

**Other business:**

B. Parker noted that the MIDC has formerly dissolved and part of that process was to recommend to the Selectmen where the approximately \$7000 would go. They made a motion to recommend that the money go for economic development purposes, so maybe this committee could put together a request for the Selectmen as to the use of that money.

G. Infanti thanked Bill Parker for his assistance in making this work. In addition to running the department, there's a lot of work with three committees; all the reports, the meetings and the minutes out to us. We're all volunteers, but Bill is doing the majority of the work so he and his department should be acknowledged. B. Parker said this is so very important to the town and this group is a pleasure to work with. J. Langdell added “bravo” to the volunteers.

The next meeting will be determined at a later date.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55AM.